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Talking Points, Glendive Rotary and Lions Club Meeting

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**Suggested Talking Points
Glendive Rotary and Lions Club Meeting
August 22, 2011**

Lions President Dr. Troy Myers will introduce you.

Good Afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to join your meeting. I have to say after listening to you plan Moonlight over Makoshika [Ma-Koosh-Ka] I might just have to come back [Smile].

I want to thank you Dr. Meyers for that kind introduction. Folks like you inspire all of us to keep working hard to make sure Montana stays the best place to live, work and raise a family. You graduated from Dawson County High School. You worked hard to earn your degree. And you brought that knowledge right back here to Glendive, where your successful optometry practice helps support jobs and enriches the community. I thank you for your hard work.

Unfortunately, in today's economy too many young Montanans are having a hard time find good-paying jobs that allow them to stay in the communities they love. That's why job creation is my number one priority.

Last Congress, I was proud to pass my Small Business Jobs bill into law. Because of the Small Business Jobs bill, we now have the State Small Business Capital Initiative, which has made more than \$100 million dollars in new lending available to Montana businesses looking to expand.

I started this year off by reintroducing my VETS Jobs bill to give small businesses a tax credit to hire veterans. And I've followed up with two more bills to bolster that legislation.

First the Hiring Heroes Act, which makes sure the skills our troops learn can be easily transferred into the civilian workforce. And second, a bill to hold federal agencies accountable to their obligation to award contracts to veteran-owned businesses.

We brought the world's most important trading partners to Montana with the APEC meetings in Big Sky. Those meetings resulted in a GE Aviation conference earlier this month in Billings to find even more ways for GE to do business in Montana. And my staff is helping lead a group of Montana business owners on a trade mission to Canada in September.

Because trade is such an important part of job creation in Montana, I'm also fighting hard to pass a number of trade agreements that will make sure Montana ranchers, farmers and business owners can compete on a level playing field and sell more goods overseas. That package also includes a worker retraining a program to give workers the skills they need to compete in a global market as well.

I'm approaching every subject we consider through the prism of job creation. And that includes our work to reduce the deficit. There is no question our mounting debt is simply unacceptable. We need to cut spending and live within our means. And I believe we can put our fiscal house back in order in a way that supports job creation and helps our economy grow moving forward.

In Glendive, energy is a key driver of jobs and growth. Every barrel of oil we produce in Glendive supports families, grows our economy, and makes America more secure by lessening our dependence on foreign oil. I'm doing all I can to support Montana's rapidly growing energy sector and put our state on the map as an energy leader.

Part of Glendive's successful energy boom depends on the ability to connect with national commerce – and that includes Essential Air Service. That's why I've fought tooth and nail against attacks on this vital rural program.

In this latest debate over the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization, Glendive was singled out specifically as a target. But we successfully secured a commitment from Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood to continue Glendive's Essential Air Service through the current contract. And we secured two additional years for Glendive to be able to adjust its subsidies below the new \$1,000 cap.

I also know that the prosperity of the oil boom has brought new challenges with housing and infrastructure. I want you to know my team is working with local officials and folks here on the ground to find ways we can help.

As I look around the room here today, I am inspired. I see small business owners, doctors, and pillars of the community, and of course the Mayor Jimison.

You are here because you have chosen to make serving your community a priority, and I'll tell you what: there is nothing more admirable.

The work your organizations do here on the ground does as much to support our communities and jobs as anything Washington can do.

You support tomorrow's workers and business owners with everything from free dictionaries for local fifth graders, to scholarships and the endowment program you are building for Dawson Community College.

And your community events and involvement add to the quality of life that makes Montana such an attractive place to live and do business. The beautiful new “Welcome the Glendive” sign certainly caught my eye on the way into town.

And many of you know how much I enjoy hiking. So, I’m excited about the new walking trail signs and permanent trail maps in Blackbridge you’ve worked so hard on.

I understand that project was put on hold because of flooding. And I know much of Dawson County is still recovering. My team and I are here to help in any way we can. We are holding FEMA’s feet to the fire to make sure they continue to make every resource Montana needs available. And we are looking beyond FEMA to find other resources through USDA and elsewhere.

We've told Dawson County officials: don't take no for an answer. If FEMA turns you down for any reason come to us and we will review your claim. We can't make any promises, but we will do all we can. And in at a least a few cases so far, we have been able to find new information to reverse FEMA's earlier denials.

I can't thank you enough for all that you do.

Now, as leaders in the community, I'd like to hear what's on your mind [open up to questions].